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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KPAO](#) [KU](#)

SUBJECT: C/T UPDATE: PM SAYS ERA OF SOFTNESS OVER, TERROR COURT PROPOSED, INFORMATION CONTROLS AND NO TO UNLICENSED MOSQUES

REF: A. KUWAIT 538

[B](#). KUWAIT 512

[1](#)1. Summary: Prime Minister Shaykh Sabah Al-Ahmed told newspaper editors February 7 that the "era of softness" was over and the GOK would begin demolishing unlicensed mosques which the GOK partially blamed for the spread of radical ideology. The comments came during a meeting the PM called with editors of all Kuwaiti dailies to warn them about the extent of their coverage of terrorism-related stories (ref. A) and to communicate the seriousness of the government's efforts to eradicate terrorism. Reinforcing this message, the GOK also took the additional steps of proposing a special court to try terror suspects, blocking websites that incite violence, and tightening security at border checkpoints. The government continued its enforcement of a law banning fully veiled women from driving, drawing increased protest from conservative Kuwaitis. In addition, the GOK released five suspects it had captured in a Feb. 5 raid in Sulaihiya (ref. B) and announced on February 9 the death in captivity of terror suspect Amer Khlaif Al-Enezi. On the financial front, the GOK agreed to join the UN Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism and submitted the treaty to Parliament for ratification. In addition, it issued orders tightening controls over chemicals that could be used to make bombs or other weapons. End Summary.

PM Vows to End Terror, Demolish Unlicensed Mosques

[1](#)2. During a February 7 meeting (ref. A), PM Shaykh Sabah Al-Ahmed told editors of Kuwait's daily newspapers that the "era of softness" was over and that the GOK had "decided to end terrorism once and for all." Stating that terrorism was a threat to national security, the PM said that local municipal authorities had been instructed to demolish unlicensed mosques which it partially blames for the spread of radical ideology. He added that attempts to prevent such actions through "wasta," or influence, would not be accepted by Kuwaiti authorities.

Special Terror Court Proposed

[1](#)3. Reinforcing this message, the government, in coordination with MPs, proposed on February 7 the establishment of a special terror court to handle the cases of those militants that have been involved in clashes with police since January [1](#)0. MP Ali Al-Hajeri told English language daily Kuwait Times on February 8 that such a court would "issue stiff penalties against any person proved to be a member of those deviant groups involved in terrorism."

Terrorist Websites Blocked

[1](#)4. Expanding its anti-terror efforts to the internet, the Ministry of Communications began to block websites that "incite terrorism and instability" on February 6, according to the Kuwait Times. Communications Ministry U/S Hamed Khaja said the Ministry had begun compiling a list of offending websites weeks earlier, and hoped to eventually block access to these websites by as much as 90% of the time.

Border Security Tightened, Citations for Veiled Women

[1](#)5. In keeping with the tough rhetoric emanating from high-level political figures, police authorities continued to enforce a 1984 law banning fully veiled women from driving (ref. B), issuing a reported 500 citations since the enforcement of the law began in earnest in late January. The practice of requesting that women reveal their faces to police to facilitate identification was expanded to the Saudi-Kuwaiti border crossing, where conservative Kuwaitis and Saudis alike complained that the practice contravened Islamic tradition.

[1](#)6. The Kuwait Times reported February 7 that border police along the Saudi-Kuwaiti border have implemented extensive investigative procedures for those entering Kuwait, including lengthy interrogations and the photocopying of identification

documents. Some Saudi males have reportedly been denied entry because they were not traveling with their families.

Release of Suspected Militants

17. After questioning suspected militants that it had formerly referred to as "wanted terrorists," the GOK released on February 7 three Jordanians and two Saudis that it had detained during a February 5 raid in the Sulaibiya neighborhood west of Kuwait City (ref. B). The released former suspects told local dailies that they were treated well while in captivity.

Death of Detained Kuwaiti Militant

18. International press reported widely on February 9 that detained militant and former Imam Amer Khlaif Al-Enezi, brother of slain militant Nasser Khlaif Al-Enezi, suffered "heart failure" and died while in the custody of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior. The Embassy has not yet independently confirmed this information. Amer's wife remains in custody for aiding and abetting her husband and brother-in-law in terrorist activities.

Terrorist Finance Convention

19. The Council of Ministers agreed on September 7 that Kuwait would become a party to the UN Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism. The National Assembly will have to ratify this decision before it can go into effect. With this action, Kuwait will be a party to 11 of the 12 international terrorism conventions. Kuwait has not yet signed the Convention on the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings.

Tightening Controls on Chemicals

10. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has issued two orders to tighten controls over chemicals that could be used to make bombs and other explosive devices. According to Undersecretary Rasheed Al-Tabtabaei, the first order (issued February 3) prohibits petrochemical and chemical companies from selling hydrogen peroxide and its byproducts without the Ministry of Interior's permission. Ministry of Commerce inspectors visited all chemical companies in Kuwait to hand-deliver this order and to warn them not to sell without MOI approval, he said. On February 7, the ministry -- in coordination with the Ministry of Interior and the Customs Service -- issued a second order banning companies from importing chemicals without a license certified by the Ministry of Commerce.

Kuwaitis Support Terror Crackdown

11. On February 8, PolOfs attended an open forum against terrorism at the diwaniya of MP Jamal Al-Omar. Formal speakers at the forum entitled "Together Against Terrorism" included MPs Hassan Jowhar, Ali Al-Hajjiri, Saleh Ashour, Issam Al-Dabbous, Jamal Al-Omar and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Dr. Abdullah Al-Maatouq. The Minister of Communications attended but did not speak. All spoke before the media and a crowded room of onlookers about the intolerable nature of terrorism, emphasizing Kuwait's history of inclusion and tolerance and calling for stronger legislation, better parenting and enhanced controls on mosques and those issuing fatwas.

12. On February 7, PolOfs attended the liberal diwaniya of Najib Al-Saleh to discuss the issue of terror. The diwaniya was uncharacteristically packed with prominent liberals to include a Member of Parliament, the media advisor to Prime Minister, a former Chairman of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, and a number of noted columnists and academics. All engaged in an open dialogue condemning terrorism and its supporters in Kuwait. Among the comments and condemnation were suggestions on how the GOK might better deal with the threat of terror and ideological extremism. The suggestions included reforming school curricula and increased monitoring of mosque sermons.

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